

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

CLAIMS:

1. (Original) A method for treating obstructive sleep disorders, the method comprising:
 - accessing the interior of the tongue through an incision made in the skin in the vicinity of the jaw of a patient;
 - advancing an instrument through the incision into the interior of the tongue; and
 - removing an amount of tissue from the interior of the base of the tongue with the instrument.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the incision is made under the jaw between the mandible and the hyoid bone.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the accessing the interior of the tongue comprises creating a channel in the tissue between the incision and the interior of the tongue.
4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the channel passes through the mylohyoid and the geniohyoid muscles into the genioglossus muscle.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the instrument is an electrosurgical instrument.
6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the electrosurgical instrument has a curved distal end.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the removing of tissue comprises:
 - applying a high frequency voltage difference between one or more active electrodes and one or more return electrodes; and

providing an electrically conductive medium over at least a portion of the one or more active electrodes and the tissue to be removed.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising coagulating tissue in a region adjacent to the location where tissue is removed.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the removing of tissue is performed without breaching the mucosal surface of the tongue.

10. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the applying thermal energy is performed subsequently to the applying a high frequency voltage.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the removing of tissue comprises forming a cavity within the interior of the base of the tongue.

12. (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising collapsing the cavity.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising suturing the cavity.

14. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising stapling the cavity.

15. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising gluing the cavity.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the removing of tissue decreases the volume of the tongue by about 5% to about 15%.

17. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the instrument removes tissue through a mechanical process.

18. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the instrument is a rotary shaver.

19. (Currently amended) A method for treating obstructive sleep disorders, the method comprising:

forming a cavity within the interior of the tongue without breaching the mucosal surface of the tongue;

advancing a probe into the cavity, said probe comprising an active electrode; and
applying a high frequency voltage potential difference across the active electrode and a return electrode sufficient to debulk tissue without breaching the mucosal surface.

20. (Original) The method of 19, further comprising accessing the interior of the tongue without accessing an opening of the mouth in order to form the cavity.

21. (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising permanently collapsing the cavity.

22. (Original) A method for accessing the interior of the tongue, the method comprising:

making an incision under the jaw of a patient; and
channeling through tissue to within the interior of the tongue.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein the tissue channeled comprises the mylohyoid muscle, the geniohyoid muscle and the genioglossus muscle.

24. (Withdrawn) A kit for treating obstructive sleep disorders comprising:
at least one instrument for removing tissue; and
instructions for using the at least one instrument according to the method of claim 1.

25. (Withdrawn) The kit of claim 24, further comprising a closure instrument.

26. (Withdrawn) The kit of claim 25, further comprising at least one closure means.

27. (Withdrawn) The kit of claim 25, wherein the closure instrument comprises one of the group consisting of a suturing instrument, a stapling instrument and a biological glue dispenser.

28. (Withdrawn) The kit of claim 26, wherein the closure means comprises one of the group consisting of a suture, a staple and a biological glue.

29. (Withdrawn) An emplaced suture for treating obstructive sleep disorders, the emplaced suture comprising:

a length from about 3 to about 6 inches extending between two ends wherein the ends are secured together at a securement location under the chin, the length being selected to extend between the base of the tongue and the securement location.

30. (Withdrawn) The emplaced suture of claim 29 further comprising a knot securing the ends together.

31. (Withdrawn) The emplaced suture of claim 29 wherein a pledget is provided at the securement location.

32. (Withdrawn) The emplaced suture of claim 29 wherein the suture is bio-resorbable.

33. (Withdrawn) The emplaced suture of claim 29 wherein the suture is non-resorbable.

34. (Withdrawn) The emplaced suture of claim 29 wherein said length of the suture is sufficient to provide a distance between the securement location and the base of tongue is from about 1 to 2 inches.